

February 9, 2023
Lariikka
FW Path, Finland

Dearest Lady,

Thank you so much for your most recent recording, it felt so intimate. I cherish your love for me, and I love your morning recordings! I thought you might enjoy a new insight into life over here and learn about how Finland deals with emergency preparedness.

We have a National Preparedness Day on the 7th of February (7.2.) because the numbers remind people of the 72-hour national emergency preparation guideline, applicable to any emergency, natural disaster, or military crisis. The list includes food and water supplies, battery-operated radios, iodine tablets, and medicine/first aid kits. It's so Kalindi! The nation then has a recovery plan for what happens after 72 hours for everyone.

Shortly before the war in Ukraine started, Finland had run out of critical supplies (especially water filters and iodine tablets) because people had hoarded them out of fear – like the toilet paper crisis with Covid – and many were left without and panicked. Then, in September last year the government finally issued more tablets, but they too were sold out nationwide in less than 2 hours! Everything is ok now.

What I learned though, was that not everyone benefits from iodine tablets. For example, my partner and I are over 40 and in theory we don't need them, only the children need them. A dysfunctional thyroid doesn't need them either. But the mentality is "I'd rather die of iodine than nuclear radiation" and probably most households have a plentiful supply of tablets.

Some 5,5 million people live here, of which half a million are immigrants and refugees. For example, there are approx. 21,000 Somalis in Finland (since the 1960s), some 50,000 Estonians and 30,000 Russians. In addition, I think we have about 40,000 Ukrainian refugees here now.

The children are prepared at school for power cuts. Schools don't close unless of a war or something. They will use flashlights and eat cold meals. Children always get

healthy food at school – it's free in Finland. Kindergarten also provides free breakfast and an afternoon snack. Even during Covid Lockdown we had special arrangements, school was held remotely and each week we got packed lunches for our kids from school. This was such a big help to the struggling, working families. The children are taken care of.

We practiced a power cut simulation with the kids at a science museum. We had to find flashlights and medicine and candles in a dark room. We're going to do that at home and organize things better so that they know how and where to find emergency supplies so that we are ready to act confidently as a team.

Regarding go-to bags. It is challenging, with mixed feelings about potentially fleeing a military scene. Our home is generally prepared with survival gear but otherwise for an escape I just have simple go-to back packs for myself and my children with only the essential things (passport, money, and things like that). In a military crisis my partner would leave us. There is no plan B, no back up sister house. Our trust is in the hands of our government to take care of things behind the scenes, to keep us safe and trust that they will give us the necessary direction if and when needed. Most people are ok with this, but I didn't grow up here, so my mindset isn't typically Finnish. I am still learning the ropes.

We're experiencing heavy inflation. Our food and electricity costs have doubled, if not tripled. We struggled to pay our bills in January because all our money went on food. I thought I would have to leave Freedom Walk but it seems ok for now. People can't afford to buy fresh fruit or locally grown vegetables because farmers can't afford to grow them. We rely on imported produce. But we are all learning to spend and plan with caution and appreciate more. Food is on discount after 6pm, and double discount after 9pm.

I save money and create calm by sitting down and planning the whole family's meals and routines on paper for the coming week every Sunday. I don't drive so I order the groceries online. We either pick them up from the store or then when my partner is away I have it delivered home for 5 euros. It is a luxury for our family, but it is so worth it for a little peace of mind and more quality time together.

It's a warm winter, it's been unusually up and down, spring seems to be here, and we've not had a lot of sunlight. People are using energy price apps on their phones to control costs in private homes, by anticipating the price fluctuations every single day. That means they check the app every few hours to see when the prices are lowest to do laundry and cook food etc. How stressful! My friend's bill went from 400 euros to 1200 euros. That's insane! Fortunately for now, my family doesn't have to worry about that. In the meantime, we all wear cozy woolly socks on the draughty floors, others use fireplaces to heat up rooms.

Why do we have to have electric cars now too – it's so ironic! But we have two active power plants, a variety of renewable energy sources, and I believe hydrogen energy is coming soon. That also has its disadvantages.

Health-wise, Covid isn't an issue here, but other flus and respiratory viruses are. I even read that domestic violence, emotional abuse at children, and HIV rates have all increased.

OK, that's a long letter. I hope you find it a worthwhile read dear Lady – it's a glimpse into material and illusory life in Finland.

With all my love and spring hugs for you,

Thank you for giving so much of your time and energy to us. I love you.

Your Lariikka